

**Events in London's parks: the friends' perspective.**

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**Published version**

SMITH, Andrew and VODICKA, Goran (2020). Events in London's parks: the friends' perspective. Project Report. London, Festspace.

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An aerial sketch-style illustration of a park event. The scene is viewed from above, showing a large green lawn filled with people and colorful items. A blue and white striped canopy is prominent in the center. To the right, there are colorful buildings in shades of red, orange, and green. Large, dark green trees are scattered throughout the park. On the left, a road with various striped traffic signs (red and white, blue and white, orange and white) runs alongside the park. The sky is blue with light clouds.

FEST  
SPACE

# Events in London's parks: the friends' perspective

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This report was produced by Dr Andrew Smith and Dr Goran Vodicka from the University of Westminster as part of the Festspace project funded by Humanities in the European Research Area (HERA).

The authors would like to thank all the Friends groups who took part in the survey, the London Friends of Green Spaces Network (LFGN) for their help in designing and disseminating the survey, Parks for London for their support as a project partner, Professor Guy Osborn for insightful comments and Mason Edwards for the cover image.

## **Events in London's parks: the friends' perspective**

First published 2020 by Festspace  
ISBN 978-1-8380870-0-5

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'People involved with Friends of Parks groups throughout London care passionately about our much-loved public green spaces, and want them to be used and appreciated by all. We welcome the huge range of events and activities, many organised by Friends and other community groups, which help attract Londoners in to enjoy their local parks. But there is also a rising concern about a growing inappropriate commercialisation creeping into what should be public and protected oases providing a peaceful, natural alternative to our busy and often grey urban fabric. This report is an excellent look at some of the key issues in this ongoing debate, with some very thoughtful recommendations for addressing key challenges.'

**Dave Morris**, Chair of London Friends of Green Spaces Network

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# Introduction

London's parks are regularly used as venues for festivals and events. A wide range of events are staged every year, from multi-day music festivals to community fun days. This is nothing new: programmed entertainment has long been a feature of most parks. The attractive and flexible spaces that park settings provide, and their symbolic role as civic places, mean they are seen as obvious venues. In recent years, the number of events staged in London's parks has grown with new commercial festivals and exhibitions introduced. This has led to concerns over disruption to everyday use and negative environmental impacts.

This report explores the different types of events staged in London's parks, and assesses the range of impacts they have, both positive and negative. The report is based on a qualitative survey of Friends' groups undertaken in the Spring of 2020. There are now over 600 groups in London and they play an important role in helping to protect, manage and maintain the city's parks and green spaces. This means Friends groups can provide informed and involved commentaries on the state of London's parks. One key role of many groups is to organise events, but they are also some of the most vocal opponents of contested festivals - providing further justifications for focusing on their perspective in this report.

The survey that provides the basis for this report asked representatives from Friends groups about events that were staged in their parks in 2019. Restrictions implemented to curb the spread of COVID-19 meant that very few events were staged in 2020. This unusual pause in activity provides a good opportunity to reflect on the way events affect London's parks and how things might be done differently in the future.

The report is divided into 3 sections. In the first section, we identify the range of different events that are staged in London's parks. The second section discusses the positive and negative impacts that these events have; and the ways Friends groups have been involved in decisions about if and how they are staged. In the third section, there is a dedicated attempt to explore the role of events in promoting social inclusion. This reflects the objectives of Festspace, the wider research project which this report contributes to. Festspace is funded by Humanities in the European Research Area (HERA) and explores the ways festivals and events affect the inclusivity of public spaces.

Finally, the conclusion summarises the report and at the end we provide 13 recommendations directed towards the authorities responsible for managing parks.





# The parks and green spaces included in the survey

All Friends groups and user groups associated with specific parks and green spaces in London were invited to take part in the survey. An email invitation was distributed via the London Friends of Green Spaces Network (LFGN) and one of the authors attended a LFGN event to encourage groups to respond. The survey was also advertised through social media and via dedicated emails to Friends groups that advertised contact details on their websites.

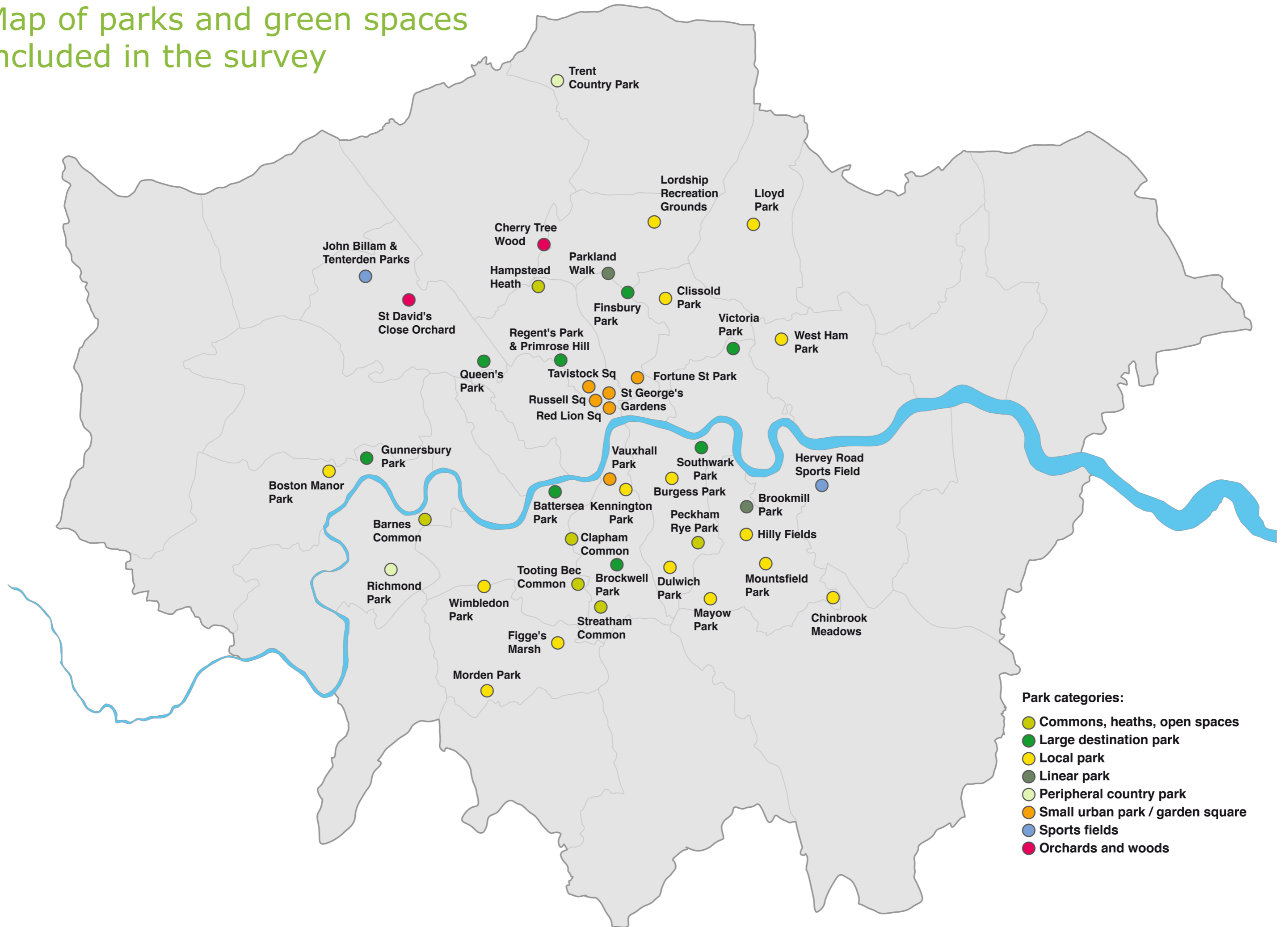
The survey attracted over 50 responses from groups representing 43 different parks and green spaces across London. A wide range of different types of parks and green spaces were covered by the submissions, and we have divided these into six categories: peripheral country parks (2); large destination parks (8); local parks (15); linear parks (2); heaths and commons (6); small urban parks and garden squares (6); publicly accessible sports fields (2); and orchards and woods (2). This means there is good variety in terms of the scale of parks included in the sample, but also in terms of different morphologies.

As the map on pages 5/6 highlights, the parks and green spaces represented in the study are located in a wide range of locations across Greater London. There is an even distribution of cases located north and south of

the river and no obvious disparity between east and west London. There is an over-representation of cases in inner London Boroughs and a corresponding absence of ones located in outer London, but otherwise a good range of locations and a wide range of Boroughs (17) feature. A range of governance modes are represented too, with local authority managed parks complemented by those run by charitable trusts, social enterprises and the Corporation of London.

We acknowledge the fact that Friends groups most affected by events were more likely to respond to the survey. Therefore, it is not possible to claim that the sample of parks and green spaces is representative of London parks generally. This issue may have resulted in the over-emphasis on Inner London Boroughs noted above. The high number of large destination parks in the sample perhaps reflects the fact that events are a particular issue for inner London spaces that can host large-scale festivals. Nevertheless, there were many responses from groups representing parks that staged no commercial events at all, and several responses from parks that staged very few events of any kind, which suggests that the sample of parks and green spaces included is varied enough to draw conclusions about the general state of park events in London.

# Map of parks and green spaces included in the survey







# Section 1: The range of events staged in London's parks

# Free to access events

The survey revealed that a large number and wide variety of free to access events were held in London's parks in 2019. Friends described their parks as having 'loads' of these events, which happened 'throughout the summer'. Large sites like Hampstead Heath reported 'around 100 events a year', but extensive programmes were evident even in some of the smallest spaces that responded to the survey. For example, the Friends of Cherry Tree Wood reported the following examples:

*'A free community festival on one day that attracted approx 10000 people over its 6 hour duration; a Race the Neighbours event pitching runners from one postcode against another; various friends group activities, tree and bulb planting, litter picking, bird and bat box making'.*

These events seemed to be regarded favourably by respondents who appreciated their accessibility, even when they were staged with specific audiences in mind. For example, the Friends of Clissold Park described: *'Two events aimed at specific local Turkish communities but open to all'*. Two other parks also reported free to access festivals that were aimed at religious and ethnic minorities.

Only 1 park reported that no events were staged in 2019, although there were 2 parks that reported 'very few' free to access events. Interestingly, these were both large destination parks which suggest different priorities for these types of spaces.

In terms of the types of free to access events staged, the most commonly cited events were those dedicated to gardening and planting,

highlighting the role of urban green spaces as productive places which promote horticulture and nature. These events were staged in a variety of green spaces, including garden squares in central London. One group provided an explanation:

*'Volunteer Gardening events were organised to try and counter the austerity that resulted in the lack of maintenance'.*

In light of controversies over the use of parks for commercial festivals, it was reassuring that there were still free music events in London's parks. Five parks reported free music festivals including Lloyd Park which hosted 35,000 people over 2 days during the Walthamstow Garden Party. A further 5 reported bandstand programmes, including Victoria Park which hosts 14 days of bandstand events every year.

Several parks hosted fairs and fun days which featured a range of events. A good example was the Dulwich Park Fair:

*'a one day community event in May - part of the Dulwich Festival. There was a dog show, maypole, Vauxhall City Farm, magician and Punch and Judy and a stage where dance groups, bands and choirs performed for free. Attracted over 7,500 people and was organised by volunteers'.*

Alongside the provision of fairs, dog shows, running events and other sports activities, there was also widespread provision of walks and talks, plus several art events. Parks even hosted events outside daylight hours: including light shows and a star gazing event (in West Ham Park).



# Events organised by Friends groups

A significant number of the free to access events mentioned above were organised by Friends groups. Reflecting the previous discussion, nature-oriented events were the most commonly mentioned type of event organised by Friends. Fifteen groups mentioned that they organised various types of nature or history walks, and almost as many (14) reported organising planting/gardening activities. The other types of events mentioned by multiple groups were clean ups (7), free concerts (5), art activities (5) and fairs (4).

The range of events organised by Friends groups and the rationale for staging them was highlighted by this response:

*'...the aim is to have something each month that will appeal to a wide range of the local community - volunteer gardening, history walks, bird walks, park spring clean.'*

Several groups (9) expressed clearly that events they organised were focused on local communities and used expressions such as: 'engage'; 'involve'; 'bring together'; 'foster a sense of pride'; and 'celebrate' to explain why they organised them.

These events help to generate funds for Friends groups and, in the

case of Peckham Rye Park, funding for the park:

*'The annual fete brings together the local communities ...the local community help organise and man stalls. The fete is the only event that financially benefits the Park/ Common.'*

There was an interesting reflection by the Friends of Clissold Park about the pitfalls of organising events:

*'We try to have a big community event every two or three years. We had local community and public sector stalls, activities (e.g. coconut shy), tree walks, guided tours of the house, a history talk, exercise classes, live music. Focus was on community and health and well-being. [It] coincided with closing of the local high street to traffic which turned out to be a bad idea as there was so much to do there, no-one came into the park. Also, the weather was pretty bad!'*

Three groups reported that they did not organise any events in 2019. One group said it was because they were anticipating the start of the major redevelopment project and another stated that due to governance of their park, all events are organised by the city. Another acted more as a campaign group that actively resists inappropriate events.

# Paid entry events

In parks that reported paid entry events in 2019, the most commonly cited examples were commercial music festivals and fun fairs. Over a quarter (11) of Friends groups reported ticketed music festivals in their parks and, in addition to well known venues for these events - Finsbury Park, Brockwell Park, Gunnersbury Park, Clapham Common and Victoria Park - other spaces reported hosting music festivals too: Boston Manor Park, Morden Park, Peckham Rye Park, Streatham Common, Tooting Common and Trent Country Park. In some cases, groups reported multiple festivals.

*'Leading up to Wireless there were a number of other events - this meant that for most of the summer our park was mostly out of bounds. The fabric of the park suffered and the noise/disruption to the local community was unacceptable.'*

There are some signs that large scale ticketed events are being expanded to include other types of festivals too. The Friends of Kennington Park reported a festival themed around the TV series Friends which occupied their park for 2 weeks. Two groups mentioned ticketed festivals celebrating particular ethnicities. Paid entry winter festivals were reported by Southwark Park and Clapham Common. Another significant category of paid entry events

revealed by our survey of Friends groups was open-air cinema/theatre events. These were generally regarded favourably by respondents. For example, The Friends of Dulwich Park reported that their Luna Cinema screenings were *'popular and had little impact on the park'*.

Of the 43 parks that responded to our survey, just under a quarter (10) reported no commercial events at all. These were mainly smaller green spaces. In most parks, only a few commercial events are staged. But in some of London's largest parks a large number of paid entry events were mentioned. The Friends of Richmond Park reported: *'Typically 170 or so events per month'* - mainly running, cycling and other fitness events that required some form of entry fee. These events encourage exercise but can be disruptive to other users especially when several thousand participants are involved. Constructing temporary arenas, often occupying large parts of parks, to stage arts exhibitions and corporate events was also something reported by several Friends groups.

Most of the paid entry events reported made use of the open spaces that parks provide, but few were linked to their status as natural, green spaces. There were some exceptions: 3 parks reported paid entry events that involved environmental education.





## Section 2: The impacts of events staged in London's parks



# Which events are associated with positive impacts?

When Friends groups were asked which events staged in 2019 had the most positive impacts on their parks, 7 groups stated that all had positive impacts and a further 5 stated that all community/free events had positive impacts. This highlights the general positivity surrounding events staged in London's parks.

The most commonly cited events regarded as making a positive contribution were various fun days, fairs and carnivals. These were viewed as good ways of bringing more people into parks and bringing communities together. A good example was the response from Queens Park:

*'The most positive [event] is Queen's Park Day bringing in 17K through [the] doors, supporting many organisations, through a range of events bringing the community together in many different ways.'*

Concerts, gardening events, nature walks, and funfairs / circuses were also cited by more than one Friends group as events that had the most positive impact on their park. Nature walks were deemed to be good ways of promoting environmental awareness and pro-environmental behaviours. For example, the Friends of Brockwell Park felt these events:

*'Encourage people to value biodiversity in the park, so the community is more likely to want to be involved with protecting and enhancing our biodiversity assets.'*

# Positive impacts explained

An interesting set of reasons were given to explain why certain events made a positive contribution. A significant number of groups mentioned community cohesion and the role of events as occasions that bring people together. A related reason cited was the contribution certain events made to inclusivity, with free events regarded as good ways of bringing 'a wider group of people into the park'. At a more basic level, events were regarded by 6 Friends groups as good ways of getting more people to use the park. The Friends of Regents Park and Primrose Hill told us that:

*'The bandstand concerts were very popular - over 15,000 people came and sat on the deckchairs or the grass- bought picnics, kids etc. Klezmer on the Bandstand is a huge one-day Jewish music event that is free and very popular. It attracts around 5,000 people (many non-Jewish) during the one day'*

Attracting more users, even in these large numbers, was generally seen as a positive thing. As the Friends of St George's Gardens explained: 'we want the gardens to be used'. Events were regarded by some groups as good ways of promoting their parks, hopefully prompting future visits. For example, Hilly Fields Park and Brook Mill Park reported the positive impacts from a

*series of talks which 'drew in a large audience and were informative and raised the profile of the park'.*

Seven user groups cited the income generated by events as a key positive impact. Friends groups representing Gunnersbury Park, Victoria Park and Boston Manor highlighted that large music festivals generated significant sums of money for management authorities. Groups representing Victoria Park, Lloyd Park, Richmond Park and Russell Square reported that income earned had been used to upgrade park facilities, maintain environments or fund other free to access events.

One of the most interesting positive impacts cited was the way events helped to get users more involved in their parks. The Friends of Cherry Tree Wood told us that their events programme 'engaged with the local community and involved them directly in planning a range of activities'. At Lordship Rec, a renowned example of community-led management, the Friends group felt that their events empower community groups and their members and 'help them see that it's our park and we are the local community taking responsibility for it'.





# Which events are associated with negative impacts?

A large number of Friends groups (12) reported that their parks didn't host any events that had negative effects. Countering this positivity were 3 groups that reported that 'all' events caused negative impacts. One group told us:

*'all of them damaged the grass for prolonged periods, left litter, and fenced off large areas that local residents would otherwise be able to access. A large part of the Common is already 'off limits' due to sports pitches, and so the event space forms a significant portion of the remainder.'*

Where examples were cited, music festivals were the most commonly mentioned type of problematic event. The groups that cited these tended to be those representing some of London's largest parks; with Wireless + Community (both Finsbury Park), Lovebox (Gunnelsbury Park), Kisstory (Streatham Common), Gala (Peckham Rye Park), Eastern Electrics (Morden Park) and Mighty Hoopla + Cross the Tracks (both Brockwell Park) all named events deemed to have negative impacts.

Other cultural festivals such as religious festivals were also regarded as problematic by some groups,

mainly because of damage to turf. This was also a problem linked to funfairs, which require heavy vehicles be taken into parks. These installations not only damage turf, they cause soil compaction which can harm tree roots; a specific concern noted by 2 groups. Damage to park surfaces, resulting in lengthy restrictions on use whilst environments are restored, is a particular problem in the winter months: 3 groups reported that winter festivals were responsible for the most negative impacts on their parks.

Whilst it was not surprising to see some Friends groups opposing major music festivals, some event conflicts were perhaps less expected. Several Friends groups expressed concerns with exercise 'bootcamps' and park runs. This was a noted issue in very large country parks, but also in smaller parks. This problem was partly due to the size of some running events (Richmond Park reported 600+ parkrunners), but it was also due to fundamental differences between users. One group highlighted the contrast between *'people wanting peace and contemplation, nature and wildlife; and sports people rampaging up and down shouting'*.



# Negative impacts explained

The reasons events were cited as having negative impacts were varied, but 3 core problems were cited by a large number of groups: noise; damage to grassed areas; and restricted access. The most frequently mentioned problem was noise, although this was usually referred to in conjunction with other issues rather than being a standalone problem. For example, one group reported that: *'We are aware of complaints from residents relating to parking, litter and noise related to large commercial events arranged through the Council'*. Several groups noted that noise from events not only affected people inside the park, it impacted those living nearby, particularly when there were *'varying levels of intense bass noise'*.

Alongside noise, damage to park surfaces and restrictions on park use were the most commonly cited negative impacts. These problems are linked: damage to turf means that people cannot access areas

whilst repairs are made. Two groups both mentioned that parts of their park were inaccessible / unusable for 6 months following major festivals, whilst another told us that a music festival puts their football pitches out of action for 7 months. Damage to turf is caused by event attendees but also by installations which deprive grass of sunlight/water and because *'lorries tear up the grass if it is damp when they arrive or leave'*. In qualifying this problem, some Friends groups pointed out that the damage can be repaired, often quickly: *'The Fun Fair damaged the grass but it recovered quickly'* (Friends of West Ham Park).

Restrictions on park access during events and during their assembly / derig was also noted as a key problem. The time it takes to set up and take down events means that a weekend long event equals *'Restricted use one week before and two weeks after'*. Groups complained about the amount of space and time events take up, particularly when

multiple ticketed events were staged in key spaces. One group felt that: *'The number of ticketed summer events restricts access to the most desirable parts of the park'*. This problem was exacerbated in areas where few local people had access to gardens:

*'many people in our area live in flats and don't have private access to outdoor space, so when a fun fair or circus comes for 10 days and takes up a large portion of the park then it restricts access to outdoor space'*.

Most events were relatively short in duration, but some lasted for several weeks. One winter event lasted 28th Nov 2018 to 5th January 2019 which meant *'nearly half the park was closed off with 10 foot fences for such a long time'*. Problems with the aesthetics of 'ugly' fences used to restrict access to ticket holders were also highlighted by some groups.

Other issues mentioned by multiple (3) groups were litter and

various issues with congestion, traffic and parking. Reassuringly, crime and antisocial behaviour were only mentioned by isolated cases, although 1 group did note that a music festival staged in their park was accompanied by *'4 non-fatal stabbings'*. Another felt that music festivals were justified as cultural events, but the reality was different: *'The business of drink with loud music "festivals" has been misrepresented as a cultural expression for which space must be found'*. One other interesting issue highlighted was low level commercialisation; with one group suggesting events mean that parents are pressured to spend money when they visit the park.



# Formal objections

Concerns about the negative impacts highlighted above meant that nearly half of groups reported they had formally objected to event proposals in 2019: 17 before, and 1 after specific events. A similar number (18) said they had not objected to any proposals to stage events in their park in 2019. One of these groups explained that timely consultation meant they didn't need to object: *'No. We are involved at a much earlier stage so events we are likely to object to don't happen!'* Two groups explained they did not object to any events but did raise concerns about vehicles being in the park.

One group contextualised their objections as follows:

*'Our objections are legion, extensively documented, campaigned at all levels without result. The council asserts it makes*

*money from mega commercial events, but we have demonstrated this is false. Its insistence appears to be solely politically motivated to satisfy its supporter constituency in the east of the Borough.'*

Nine groups specified that their objections were specifically related to the environmental damage events caused. Other reasons for objections reflect the concerns noted above: noise issues, anti-social behaviour, disturbance to local residents, violence, volume of people, drugs, light disturbance, traffic congestion, illegal parking, using football pitches as a car park, litter, heavy equipment, a smelly generator, fencing off sections of the park for days/weeks.

# Involvement in decision making

When asked about the ways they have been involved in the wider decision-making process about events staged in their park in 2019, 6 groups said they haven't been involved at all and 5 responded 'not much'. On the other hand, 3 groups stated they were entirely involved in the process, with another 3 stating they were 'fairly' involved.

Eight groups told us that they were only involved in decision making related to one or a few specific events. In some cases these were big music festivals and in others these were small events.

Ten groups described their involvement in the decision-making process as taking part in regular council-led park management groups for 'all stakeholders' or public consultation meetings. The latter were often criticised:

*'Invited to public consultation evenings - painful droning from dull businessmen explaining how things were going to be so much better than the previous year. Sub text - how little do we have to spend to keep you lot quiet?'*

Unsurprisingly, the most discontent came from groups not involved in the process:

*'The Borough imposes events on the park and allows no adverse representations from Friends, visitors or residents to interfere with its programme of event expansion, whatever the damage to the park, and loss of amenity over the summer weeks to our community.'*

The most positive involvement in decision-making processes was outlined by the Friends of Lordship Rec:

*'The park's community/council co-management body meets monthly and oversees and discusses all repairs, improvements and major activities/events in the park. In particular the Friends are formally consulted by the Council over every application to hold an event about whether we have any objection to the event as a whole (we do occasionally) or seek any specific conditions to be put on the event (which we suggest sometimes and the Council often agrees).'*





## Section 3: The inclusivity of events staged in London's parks

# Inclusion: do park events represent local communities?

As noted in previous sections, events are good ways of reaching out to individuals and groups who might not otherwise use parks and can foster community cohesion. But how inclusive are park events and how well do they represent the communities who live nearby? According to the results of the survey, 15 Friends groups believe that events organised in their park matched local socio-demographics fairly well. Only 2 groups explicitly stated this was not the case. However, 10 groups said they were unable, or unsure how, to reply to this question.

Several groups mentioned that one of the barriers that restricted the socio-economic inclusiveness of some events was the price of tickets:

*'The area is generally not well-off so the price of the paid event, £14 each was too much for many families.'*

The visible presence of paid entry events in parks puts pressure on families to attend even if they can't really afford to:

*'The fun fair is quite expensive and we live in an economically diverse area where there are quite a few areas of deprivation. I think a lot of parents who are struggling financially feel obliged to take their kids to the fun fair and circus even if they find it difficult to afford.'*

There was a perception that events tend to be focused on certain socio-economic groups and that there:

*'Could be more events which attract specific age groups, interest groups and minority-ethnic groups'*

Even though they were freely accessible, there was recognition that events organised by Friends groups, *'tended to attract a greater proportion of white young families than is a true reflection of the socio-economic composition of the area'*. However various examples of more inclusive events were cited. For example, 1 group reported that a refugee group had participated in one of their gardening events.





# Inclusion: attracting new or different users

When Friends groups were asked if the events organised in 2019 attracted people that do not normally use their park, there was overall consensus about this with 30 groups giving a positive answer and further 4 saying 'possibly'. However, it is important to note that the question was mostly interpreted as one relating to attracting people from further afield rather than under-represented ethnic / socio-economic groups. According to the survey, the types of events that attract people other than everyday users are mainly music and religious festivals followed by fun and winter fairs. Other events mentioned in this light were: arts events, sports events, fireworks, annual park day, clean ups, gardening and events organised by schools.

Fun fairs were noted ways of attracting a wider set of socio-economic groups. However, some comments suggested that attracting new users doesn't necessarily mean that attendees develop a new appreciation of the park, or will come back:

*'I expect many of the fun fair and circus goes do not normally use the park, but I don't think they benefited from the park experience by going to these events.'*

Although several groups mentioned that religious festivals drew people beyond the usual park users, only 1 group explicitly pointed out the multicultural nature of the event:

*'Open Iftar 2019 attracted a large number of people, it offered a multicultural gathering of all faiths prompted by the ethos of Ramadan in Islamic faith.'*

As we mentioned previously, many groups believed that events, especially free ones, succeeded in bringing people together. The overall sentiment about the effects of events on park diversity and inclusion seem to be well captured in the following statement:

*'The events have definitely introduced a greater variety of people to the park but there may be other events that would draw a more diverse group to better match the socio demographics of the area.'*

A possible way of achieving this is by involving a range of groups and communities in organising events, as highlighted by this response:

*'Our events are always fully integrated and inclusive with local service providers, charities, primary schools, churches and the local community.'*

# Conclusions

This report has reaffirmed that London's parks are used for a wide range of events. Alongside fun fairs, music performances and sports activities, we have highlighted that horticultural events and nature walks were surprisingly prominent in 2019 event programmes. Our research also revealed a series of innovative events were staged: with festivals dedicated to specific communities, night events and art exhibitions notable examples. The significant role that Friends groups play in organising many of these events was reaffirmed by the responses to the survey.

Events, particularly those that are free to access, have a series of very positive impacts on parks. They bring people in, diversify users, boost awareness and generate income that can be used to help maintain parks. The prevalence of horticultural and nature-oriented events also highlights their role in promoting pro-environmental behaviours. The most positive effects seem to stem from instances where Friends and other local groups were involved in organising events. Friends groups want to stage more events, but are prevented from doing so by limited organisational capacity, low demand and unhelpful procedures.

Friends groups also feel that some events cause negative impacts; with restricted accessibility, damage to park environments and disruption

of surrounding neighbourhoods the key complaints. These effects are associated with large scale festivals; and, to a lesser extent, fun fairs and circuses. Over a quarter of the parks that responded to the survey hosted major music festivals in 2019 and, although Friends groups were generous enough to acknowledge these mean: *'three nights of 40,000 people having a good time'* (Friends of Gunnersbury Park and Museum), they cause negative effects. For example, several groups reported restrictions for 6-7 months whilst parks surfaces were restored. This problem and other issues meant that last year around half of Friends groups objected to events. Many Friends groups reported that their involvement in decisions to stage park events was limited or non-existent.

Finally, our report suggests that events have an important role to play in making parks more inclusive. Festival and events can attract a wider set of users in terms of socio-economic and ethnic profiles; and they produce places where people from different backgrounds encounter one another. Park events can help to build more cohesive and tolerant communities by ensuring marginalised people are visibly represented in prominent public spaces. However, more needs to be done to ensure event programmes represent the interests and profiles of surrounding neighbourhoods.



# Recommendations

The following recommendations are directed towards the authorities responsible for managing parks. Some of these were suggested specifically in the responses submitted by Friends groups (2, 5, 6, 8, 10). The remainder have been conceived by the authors based on responses to the survey.

## Regulations and procedures

1. Friends groups and other user groups should be involved in event planning and management decisions. Consultation needs to be timely and meaningful.
2. Decisions whether or not to stage events should be guided by an up to date event policy that is co-produced with Friends and other user groups.
3. Local community groups should be encouraged to organise free to access events by introducing more user friendly procedures and through training in event marketing / management.
4. London wide legislation that restricts paid entry events to a maximum amount of park space and park time should be revised and enforced.
5. Surplus revenues earned from hiring out space for events should be spent on parks or on dedicated park amenities, including free to access events.

## Minimising negative impacts

6. Improve parks' suitability and resilience as venues by providing additional features and design adaptations.
7. Consider alternative outdoor venues where park settings are irrelevant to the aims and user experience of events.
8. Use summer 2020 as an experimental period (when large scale events are absent) to better understand the environmental benefits of future fallow years.
9. Avoid lengthy winter events on grass surfaces.
10. Schedule large-scale events together on consecutive weekends with shared installations - to minimise disruption to park access.

## Inclusion

11. Ensure social inclusion outcomes are included in criteria used to adjudge the merits of staging events and incorporate park events into wider social policy.
12. Ensure programmes represent the interests and profiles of surrounding neighbourhoods by involving local stakeholders in organising events and planning programmes.
13. Consider events as processes, not merely occasions, by using event planning/organisation to advance social inclusion. Provide dedicated funding and support for events organised jointly between different community groups.





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